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TAGS: [KPAO](#) [KMDR](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [MZ](#)  
SUBJECT: U.S. ELECTIONS PROGRAMS A BIG DRAW IN MOZAMBIQUE

REF: A. MAPUTO 782  
[1](#)B. MAPUTO 637

[1](#)1. SUMMARY: Responding to the enthusiastic Mozambican interest in the U.S. Presidential race, Public Affairs Maputo continues to organize successful elections-related events, with several more planned in the final month of campaigning. These events have been excellent opportunities to engage key audiences on democracy and U.S. foreign policy, and for Mozambicans to interact directly with Americans on issues of interest and concern. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. The U.S. elections season is in full swing in Mozambique. Elections programs provide a special draw as Mozambique is preparing for its own (municipal) elections just two weeks later, on November 19; there have been several political party shake-ups here, tests of democracy. Building on the positive responses to our programs in July and August (reftels), Public Affairs Maputo recently hosted a number of new events in Maputo and a discussion around the IIP PowerPoint "Elections 2008" at our American Corner in the northern Muslim city of Nampula.

#### A Variety of Approaches and Venues

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[1](#)3. The first PAS-hosted U.S. Elections roundtable with students from Mozambique's Higher Institute of International Relations (ISRI) in July (Ref. A) raised many questions about what drives American political parties. Responding to that interest, Public Affairs invited the students back on October 1 to talk about American political parties. The ISRI undergraduates had clearly been following the campaign closely and asked thoughtful questions on party history and support bases, considerations in voter decision-making, and how each candidate is likely to approach Africa.

[1](#)4. The 90-minute conversation with three Mission officers came between PAS' showing of the first presidential debate on September 29 and the vice-presidential debate on October 6. Both debates drew nearly full-house crowds who were not bashful about giving their opinions on the candidates' answers, their debating styles, and even who "won."

[1](#)5. On a lighter note, PAS chose the Hollywood film "Dave" from the ECA elections-themed film list to show on October 2. Despite the humorous approach of the movie, it prompted a serious discussion about the role of the Vice President, an office which does not exist in Mozambique, in comparison to the office of the Prime Minister here.

#### The Debates are Catching On

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[1](#)6. With a Public Affairs grant, two local NGOs--The Center for Mozambican and International Studies and the Martin Luther King Institute--will host a panel discussion on the 2008 U.S. Election and foreign policy. Two Embassy officers will participate in the October 8 event, which will be the catalyst for a series of student debates throughout Maputo. The finalists of the college debate

series, representing the Democratic and Republican parties, will square off in a last debate at the Mission's grand election night celebration at the National Conference Center on November 4 (cable to follow).

#### Mozambican Journalists Will Bring the Race Home

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¶17. Coverage in the local media of the U.S. election will be thorough in the next several weeks, as two Mozambican journalists participate in Foreign Press Center elections reporting programs, covering the final presidential debate in New York, and the election itself on November 4. Both writers' reports in two different independent weeklies are expected to be widely read as the Mozambican perspective on the U.S. democratic process and campaign.

¶18. Copies of elections-themed e-Journals and translated America.gov and IIP publications, such as the candidates' bios and articles on African-American voters, are flying off the shelves at all of these events and in the IRC and American Corners. The Mission is equally enthusiastic about the elections. With the variety and number of elections programs taking place, Americans from across the Mission are participating in our public diplomacy efforts.

#### COMMENT: Considering the Possibilities

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¶19. The discussions accompanying the elections 2008 events often focus on the current campaign in the context of U.S. history, with the comment that Americans are breaking new ground in their political experience. Mozambicans too are considering the possibilities. One civil society leader told PAO that he would like

MAPUTO 00000963 002 OF 002

to organize the first-ever debate between the Mozambican presidential candidates next year. The 2008 election has been a unique opportunity to engage Mozambicans on issues of American policy and democracy, themes upon which PAS Maputo plans to build, even after November. END COMMENT.

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